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Rocky Mountain Meeting

Plans for the second meeting of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association are now being effected. As already announced, the meeting will be in Denver, during the Thanksgiving weekend, under the auspices of the University of Denver. As at the first annual meeting, affiliated societies will have special responsibility for particular group meetings. The College English Association and the National Council of Teachers of English will sponsor the Saturday morning meeting, "Problems in the Teaching of English in High School and College."

INDIANA C.E.A. VOTES AFFILIATION

The Indiana College English Association held its thirteenth annual conference on Friday and Saturday, April 30, May 1, at South Bend, as guests of the University of Notre Dame.

Following its tradition, the Association devoted its Friday afternoon sessions to a discussion of problems in literature, based on two papers. Mr. W. A. Sutton of Ball State Teachers College, in "Gertrude Stein Talking," presented a stenographic report of conversations with Gertrude Stein relative to various problems of writing. Mr. Martin Shockley of Evansville College gave an exposition de texte of one of Hart Crane's poems, "Lachrymae Christi."

The banquet meeting Friday evening was addressed by Dean Harlan Hatcher, of the College of Arts and Science, The Ohio State University, on the subject, "Toward American Cultural Maturity."

On Saturday morning Mr. Raymond W. Pence of DePauw University presided at a symposium, "The Case and Place for Grammar in College Elementary English Composition." Participants were Mr. Frank Moran, University of Notre Dame; Miss Bertha M. Watts, Canterbury College (Miss Watts' paper was read by Proxy); and Mr. Harold E. Whitehall, Indiana University. There was general agreement about the "case" and the "place," but lively discussion centered around the kind of grammar, with "traditional" and "prescriptive" grammar being opposed by the merits of "descriptive" grammar.

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1948 OFFICERS

As a result of the 1948 elections, the following officers are hereby declared elected:

President, Theodore Spencer, Harvard University.

Vice Presidents: Arthur K. Davis, University of Virginia; and John W. Dodds, Stanford University.

Subject to approval at the next election, President Spencer has appointed Gordon Keith Chalmers, President, Kenyon College to the vacancy on the Board of Directors caused by President Spencer's election. Ex-President Odell Shepard automatically becomes a member of the Board of Directors for three years.

New Treasurer

The Association has a new treasurer, Professor William A. Owens, Columbia University. Henceforth the Treasurer's office will have the same address as the Secretary's: Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, N. Y. All members please note.

Professor Jackson, who has served us long and faithfully, begged to be relieved last winter. He most generously assumed office when Professor Richardson had to resign because of ill health, and continued steadfastly while the Association grew. A vote of thanks should be an order of business at our next annual meeting for his careful custodianship of the Association's funds.

The new Treasurer is a Texan, with B.A. and M.A. from Southern Methodist, and Ph.D. from Iowa (1941). He has taught at Texas A. & M., Univ. of Texas, and Mississippi State College. Out of three years in the Army with the Counter Intelligence Corps, he spent twenty months in the Pacific, making the Leyte and Luzon landings, and sweating out the battle of Manila. He has a collection of ballads scheduled for publication November 1.

Members are requested to send the editor comments on English Teachers and English Teaching which they come across in their reading.

Please do not suppress that urge to write the editor.

The Muse's Mother-in-Law

As I look back on my first year as a graduate student in English, I recall very vividly the sense of oppression and depression with which I was overcome. I felt like a youngster reporting for work at an old, old mine. The richest deposits had been thoroughly worked out. The big, exciting pockets of nuggets had already been rifled. The mine shafts and tunnels now led further and further underground. And all around one lay mountains of slag, with the dinginess and dreariness which only a mountain of slag can embody.

The giants of English literature, I found, had been processed and reprocessed. The second-rate figures had been carefully edited and their letters printed. Not even among the third-rate figures was it easy to stake out a new claim for oneself. Did one want to work on Colley Cibber? A book on Colley Cibber was in process of publication. What about writing a life of Tom May? Tom May's life had been written. The labor of scholars had extended on beyond the men of letters themselves to encompass persons and events which were related to literature only at second hand. To illustrate: I once heard a very interesting paper on the legal affairs of Thomas Middleton's mother-in-law. The scholar who read the paper had been interested in Thomas Middleton and perhaps interested in Elizabethan drama; when, however, no further information about Middleton turned up, but a juicy law suit of his mother-in-law did, the scholar brought to bear upon the mother-in-law's affairs all the formidable implements of modern research. I enjoyed the paper, let me add; but it seemed to me to deserve the same comment that the paper abstracted from Falstaff's pocket drew from Prince Hal: "Oh monstrous; but one half-penny worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!"

But it is important to observe that the implements of modern research work just as well on the problems of Middleton's mother-in-law as they work on the problems of Middleton himself. That is their glory and their limitation. Excellence of scholarship is no guarantee that the material on which it is expended has any real significance. It is a point that we tend to forget, and this may account for a state of affairs in which our more minute research deals typically not with the affairs of the poet's Muse but rather with those of his mother-in-law.

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Revolution Over?

When two professors and a publisher agree, that's news. And when they agree on scholarship, that's revolution. But when they agree in their heresies, the revolution is probably over. Here's how it was. Last April 24, the N. Y. Council of Teachers of English had a meeting at Rutgers. It was well attended and those who went got their money's worth and a dividend, too. The speakers were Cleanth Brooks, Yale; Robert Spiller, Pennsylvania; and Joseph Brandt, President, Henry Holt. Professor Brooks led off, and his remarks appear in full in this issue. Professor Spiller's paper, **Function of Literary Research, A Reconsideration,** and Dr. Brandt's address, were carefully summarized by the secretary, Mrs. Lillian H. Hornstein, N.Y.U. Through her courtesy, the following excerpts from the secretary's report are presented. (N.B. By general agreement, the high point of the meeting was **Pedantiad,** a poem by William Parker, new Secretary of MLA. He ought to print it in **PMLA** as an act of grace.)

Mr. Spiller stressed that the study of modern literature does not require the same kind of scholarship that is needed for classical studies. He also urged that scholars have not paid sufficient attention to literature since 1790. Moreover, mere survival is no evidence of literary worth.

For the new literature, the new novel, an initial critical judgment must be made before objectivity can be reached, and new techniques (for example, from history and the social sciences) are needed for the new materials. There is a close connection between literary problems and other problems of the day—but neither should be studied in a vacuum. Literary research should provide a means

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Application for entry as Second Class matter at Mineola, N. Y., is pending.

Sing high! Sing low!

The dilletante dice are crooked
And pedantry loathes the game,
While the bookmaker wonders or
snickers or thunders
At play written up in his name.

What price is the rich perception
And what are the odds on style?
Won't a parlay of spit, polish,
humor, and wit
Pay off even once in a while?

The influence tip is phony
And history's check is forged,
Yet the customers play, for the
game's rigged that way,
Till they're bankrupt, or bleary,
or gorged.

The system has paid protection;
Its rake-off's a high percent
Of the profit and pleasure and
sense in good measure
That was really the bookie's
intent.

Sing high! the English requirement.
Sing low! for the Ph.D.
And for tenure hooray, and a
long holiday
On a miniscular salary!

R.T.F.

Indiana CEA—

At the business meeting on Saturday morning, the Indiana association unanimously voted to become affiliated with the national group, the College English Association. New officers elected were: President, John L. Bloxsome, Rose Polytechnic Institute; Vice-President, George S. Wykoff, Purdue University; Secretary-Treasurer, Villa L. Deubach, Anderson College. Retiring officers were: President, Russell Noyes, Indiana University; Vice-President, John L. Bloxsome, Rose Polytechnic Institute; Secretary-Treasurer, Edna Hayes Taylor, DePauw University.

GEORGE S. WYKOFF
Purdue University

New York Meeting

The New York State Section of C. E. A. met at Wells College on May 1, 1948. George Nesbitt, Hamilton, stressed the importance of classroom informality, with questions and answers, and brought the Battle of the Books up to date by advocating classics (OEDIPUS REX) rather than moderns (Hemingway's short stories). Bernard Schilling, Rochester, read a paper on English for non-majors which will appear shortly. Edwin Cady, Syracuse, illustrated his ideas on the presentation of literature by discussing Whitman's "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed." He stressed the biographical, historical, and intellectual approach and spoke of the importance of background material and the analysis of form and structure. After an hour's discussion, the group adjourned for dinner. President Greene of Wells College welcomed the members, and speaking from his experience as an English teacher, reminded them how important it was not to take themselves too seriously. Leo Rockwell, Colgate, spoke of the history of anthologies, giving examples which illustrated the varying emphases on classical, English, and American readings. With some bitterness he deplored the modern slogan "integration." The meeting, the speakers, the discussion, the weather, the place, and the hospitality all combined to make the day a memorable one.

On the invitation of Professor Kathryn Koller, the fall meeting will be in Rochester. Margaret Denny, Rochester, was elected Secretary in place of Miriam Small, Wells, who will be on leave. A nominating committee was appointed with instructions to bring in a slate of officers at the fall meeting: Strang Lawson, Colgate, Chairman, Willard Bonner, Buffalo, and Ruth Temple, Brooklyn College.

GRACE NOTE

The lyric below, read to the Washington meeting of the Association by Professor Millett and printed in the February, 1947 issue of the NEWS LETTER, seems a fitting grace note to THE MUSE'S MOTHER-IN-LAW in this issue.

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley
The falcon hath borne my mate
away,

He bore him up, he bore him
down;
He bore him into an orchard
brown.

In that orchard there was a hall
That was hanged with purple
and pall

And in that hall there was a bed
It was hanged with gold so red

And in that bed there lyeth a
knight
His wounds bleeding day and
night

By that bed's side there kneeleth a maid
And she weepeth both night and
day

And by that bed's side there
standeth a stone
"Corpus Christi" written thereon.

How Much is an Elective Course?

Is there an ideal size for an "elective course"?. Some rather dogmatic views on this subject were expressed recently in a committee meeting which the author attended. In fact, one reputable professor went so far as to say that any college which holds classes in which there are less than ten students is misusing its funds. And another no less worthy gentleman added that he could do just as good teaching in a group of forty students as in a group of twelve.

Bewildered by such outspoken opinions as these and confused by the divergence of opinion on these questions which he observed outside the committee room, the author began a study of the whole matter, of which this is a preliminary report. He sent a questionnaire consisting of seven queries to every college for women in the southeastern United States. While the results are not conclusive, some of the averages and conclusions which resulted from a tabulation of the answers are interesting.

The first question was: "How many elective courses (above freshman and sophomore level) do you keep alive in your English department by carrying them regularly in your catalog?" The replies to this question range from a minimum of 3 percent of listed courses given during each semester at Oklahoma State College for Women to a maximum of 100 percent at Mississippi State College for Women. The average percentage is 54. These figures are not so conclusive as they might be since only six institutions replied to this question. Georgia State College, Florida State University at Tallahassee, and Georgia State Woman's College are on the quarter system and could be compared only among themselves. Mary Washington responded with the statement, "We do not pad our catalog, but only list those courses that are actually offered." Perhaps this should be interpreted as a 100 percent offering; but since no figures were given, the assumption may not be safe.

The second question was: "Do you have a fixed minimum enrollment? That is, have you established a definite and rigid dead line, and if fewer students than this enroll do you "kill" the course?" Six colleges or universities definitely answered, "No." Two have established a minimum of five and three have set up ten as the limiting number. None of these limits seems to be rigid. Georgia State College says, "No, but we gaze askance at classes smaller than ten." Texas State College for Women replies, "We generally hold that we should have eight or more; but we give courses that are required of our majors to fewer." "There is a kind of unwritten law that there should be ten students enrolled in the course before it can be given . . . We have a small number of courses which have less than ten enrolled in them," reports the Woman's College of North Carolina. And sooner or later, in such a collection of material as this, the tocsin of alarm is always sounded: Mississippi contributes the following heart-warming observation, "Since there is such a trend away from liberal arts in favor of utilitarian electives, we have to protect our English electives to keep up the standards of the English Department. Therefore we let electives go through with comparatively few students." The statement of Mary Washington is interesting also: "We eliminate courses that just have a few students with the exception of courses the English Department is anxious to get started."

The third question was: "Can an instructor in your English Department do as good work with twenty-five in a section of an elective course as he can in a smaller section?" Of the eleven colleges to whom this questionnaire was sent one returned such an indefinite answer that that the material can not easily be correlated with the others. Only one expressed itself decidedly as seeing no advantage in small elective classes: "I agree that a class less than 10 students is too expensive for the state. A class less than 10 students usually does not challenge best from a professor." (Oklahoma) Eight lean decidedly toward small elective classes. Some of them were quite emphatic that "A course can be taught more intensively with fewer than twenty-five students." (Mississippi) Georgia State College insists that "About twelve students is the best number for most English electives." Florida thinks an enrollment of eight to fifteen "almost ideal." Winthrop is sure that "when an elective course is larger than 15, there is little opportunity for personal contact." Mary Washington asserts that "students doing advanced work in English benefit from small classes."

From all the remarks, the prevailing opinion seems evidently to be that the nature of the class should determine its size. "Student reaction," "free discussion on the part of every student," and "personal contact" are factors which should limit the size of a group doing elective work in English. A majority believe in the more efficacious functioning of small sections, though there is disagreement about what small means, and though their belief is sometimes restricted by carefully expressed qualifications.

Furthermore, although written and unwritten laws exist limiting the smallness of the group, these are ignored if the circumstances constitute what is considered a justification for keeping the courses. There is practically no feeling that a college is required to keep the sizes of its courses above a certain point, or suffer pangs of conscience or worse because it is misusing its funds. The average size of current electives in English is sixteen.

Finally, English Electives, by the nature of the material taught and the purpose for which it is taught, generally function more rewardingly if their size is held down, at least below twenty-five.

Paul Mowbray Wheeler
Winthrop College
Rock Hill, S. C.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

THE NOTEBOOKS OF HENRY JAMES

Edited with an introduction and commentary by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. **418 pp. index. New York: Oxford University Press. $6.**

The career of Henry James provides a striking example of a novelist who cultivated unceasingly an inexhaustible sensibility and for whom the problems and processes of his art were sources of endless fascination. To such a man it was a matter of more than common chagrin that critics and the general public alike lacked responsiveness and were little disposed to reward the artist by looking for his implications. Thus he wrote the prefaces for his collected edition as an elucidation of his methods and a plea for more discriminating appreciation.

These notebooks, with entries from 1878 to 1911, differ materially from the prefaces. They are the record of the author's private communings with himself, not intended for publication, and dealing, for the greater part, not with major issues but with specific problems of handling ideas for stories and novels. As supplementary material for the study of the novelist's methods and point of view, they are of extraordinary interest and value. Their publication makes it now possible to trace step by step the process by which James arrived at the solution of an artistic or a technical problem. They throw fresh light not only upon the working of his mind in the act of creation, but also upon his reaction to the problem of living in Europe and his enduring devotion to his art. Included with the notebooks are three related documents, the most important of which is the "scenario" for **The Ambassadors,** a detailed synopsis of great interest, previously printed in part in **Hound and Horn.**

The editors have done their work skillfully and are particularly to be commended for their care in providing an easily readable version of the manuscripts. Also noteworthy are the inserted passages of commentary relating the notes to the novels and stories evolved from them.

BRUCE McCULLOUGH
New York University

Love and War in the Middle English Romances by Margaret Adlum Gist, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1947, 214 pp., $4.00.

With a wealth of illustration and extensive references the author of this volume has sought to discover how the relations between men and women and the theory and practice of war were dealt with in the middle English Romances and whether, on the whole, this treatment was realistic or not. She has found that the romances taken together present a picture of woman's place in medieval society that is essentially truthful. In spite of the fact that women are idealized in the romances, their inferior position is clearly shown; and although the prevalence of irregular unions is indicated, they are seldom condoned in accordance with the French pattern of courtly love.

In considering war and peace the romances adopt the equivocal answer of medieval moralists to the question of how war may be reconciled with the teachings of Christianity; but they also exaggerate the part that women played as the inspiration for military encounter. Furthermore they idealize the actual conduct of war and practice of gallantry. Nevertheless we are told "that the romances present the essential outlines and the fundamental concepts of medieval society and reproduce faithfully the ideals which were the correctives for the many evils of the age."

R. BALFOUR DANIELS
University of Houston

A CHARME
ffor babees at night

Turne off ye light,
This is night.
Never feare,
Angels neare.
No more fun,
Littel sonne.

OR HERE MAY BE INTONED:

Drinke of water
Littel daughter?
God be wth you,
We will misse you.
No more talkinge,
Catts are stalkinge!

Albert Howard Carter
938 West Douglas Street
Fayetteville, Arkansas

High School College English Some Hard Sense

Among topics of interest on the program of the first meeting of the Rocky Mountain M.L.A., was the symposium on "What the College Freshman Should Bring from High School English," under the chairmanship of Professor Walson O. Clough (Wyoming).

Dr. Ben Gray Lumpkin (Colorado) first presented a "Positive Method of Teaching Sentence Structures," through the medium of writing sentences imitative of living expression. His argument was that handbooks and drill exercises bring small results because they identify rather than use desirable constructions.

Dr. Harold G. Merriam (Montana) scored the practice of bringing from high schools the history of English and American literature. Such classes, he found, are not correlated with history, cover a confusion of names and titles, and require short-term memorizing. The student concentrates on what is esentially a non-literary process, and fails to grasp the work of mature authors. Dr. Merriam further questioned the teaching of composition by teachers of literature, since the standard set is one of "literary" English, and the avoidance of the practical composition needs of the student.

Sister Marie Clyde (Loretto Heights, Denver) was struck with the average freshman's

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lack of discriminating vocabulary, and lack of organizing ability.

Dr. Quincy Guy Burris (New Mexico Highlands University) stressed five needs of the entering freshman: the ability to read, some capacity to separate ideas and break down elaborated thought, some experience with writing, and some liking for literature.

Two teachers from the Albuquerque High School gave a vigorous defense of the high school. Miss Barbara Phillips reminded college teachers of the gap between high school and college, and the fact that high schools no longer perform a sifting function as in former days. The crowded high schools today, she said, respond to the pressures by short-answer tests and fragmentary composition. More emphasis is needed on essay type examinations and comprehensive reading. High school students, used to rating scales, care less and less for knowledge for its own sake, but only for the superior rating. Miss Lydia Strand corroborated Miss Phillips, and stressed the value of complete answers in oral expression as a foundation for good writing. Teachers, she said, often accept fragments of words, even facial expressions and gestures, as answers. She felt that college plunged freshmen too soon into long, unrealistic theme composition.

Miss Katherine Simons (New Mexico) maintained that the colleges are reaping the results of their own inventions and their own influence on the high schools: namely, grading by the curve, flash-card teaching of reading, emphasis on methods first, and experimental methods, and the mere mechanics of getting credits. She saw a growing need for scrutiny of the preparation of high school teachers, and for an attack on the wide-spread opinion that "anyone can teach English."

Dr. George R. Carlsen (Colorado) thought that the high school teacher was too conscious of college entrance standards, since actually but 10 percent of high school students go on to college.

Dr. C. V. Wicker (New Mexico) emphasized that if only 10 percent go to college, it is the more reason that all should get the fundamentals of education in the high school. Since the teaching of composition is difficult, we rationalize ourselves out of our responsibility by such devices as workbooks, oral English, and objective tests. Writing is a hard discipline, and should be continuous from the early grades.

W. O. CLOUGH,
Univ. of Wyoming.

Folksongs on Records

Folksongs on Records, 7 pp., mimeographed, by Ben Gray Lumpkin, 428 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, Colo. 15c. May. 1948. Copyright. This is a handy list. Says the editor, "Both collectors and teachers have frequently asked for lists of phonograph records and books used in connection with my folksong and ballad course at the University of Colorado. To provide a ready means of exchanging lists and brief comments, I propose to publish this bulletin twice a year. Please send me your suggested additions, especially on Canadian and Spanish American songs."

WINS $1200 LITERARY AWARD

Dodd, Mead and Company announces the award of the annual Inter-collegiate Literary Fellowship to Ann Birstein, a member of the class of 1948 at Queens College, New York. The prize-winning novel is tentatively entitled FRUIT OF HIS GOODNESS.

Revolution Over?

(Continued from Page 1)

for the end—but the old methods provide no technique for investigating the imagination. For example, the most objective of the old methods, the study of philosophy, has the least use for the imagination.

The subject of study should be the nature of the creative process, the problems of the relation of biography and history to the creative process. In this sense we need a redefinition of "source" and of those elements which go into literary production.

Professor Spiller suggested that though it might be difficult to draw a line betweeen scholarship and criticism, we should start our study with the work of art. He urged finally that our object of study should be to learn more about "the human spirit in its fullest creative aspects."

Dr. Brandt was the final speaker of the morning session. He pointed out by way of introduction that all three speakers on the morning program are former **Rhodes Scholars.** He then launched into his chief points of attack against the Graduate Schools, to which he referred as "the research trust now regnant in this country". He argued that he quarrelled with any system that enslaves the scholarly writer or forces the scholar into meaningless research projects.

He also raised two questions: (1) whether research is synonymous with scholarship; (2) whether research presumes the ability to be an author.

Dr. Brandt then said that in his opinion scholarship presupposes wisdom and understanding; but the academic structure of research has stopped the free play of ideas and led to an intellectual slave market. Dr. Brandt then gave statistics to prove that the awareness of idea content is very, very rare, that the public does not turn to scholars in these days: for example, 90% of the people get their ideas chiefly from the radio, 21% from newspapers, 11% from movies, and only 8% from books. Also, though there are 20,000 liquor stores in U.S.A., there are only 5,000 book stores, and of these only 500 do a business of over $5,000 a year. This points out the serious situation that the book has declined as a public force in this country. Dr. Brandt urged that the best ideas should come from scholars and should be tested by scholars. Restless questioning should be the center of research, but that questioning is missing and answers are missing. The result has been that the public is terrified when it hears that scholarly research can produce effects with which the public should be concerned. It is now the function of the scholarly writing to fill the great void between the scholar and the public.

The Muse's Mother-in-Law

(Continued from Page 1)

To return to my original metaphor: the young graduate student not only felt that the mine was worked out. He feared that his own mining might have to be conducted on one of the great heaps of waste, rehandling the low-grade ore that has been passed over by earlier miners who were anxious to get on to richer materials.

There was of course another alternative, one that has been already suggested: he might push a shaft deeper and deeper into the foundations of the hills and take what material he could find, if not that precious metal which Keats had in mind when he called literature the realms of gold, then, content himself with baser substances, remembering that even the lead of sociology was worth something and that whether in terms of lead or gold the laborer is worthy of his hire.

But in any case, this young graduate student, sobered and as I have said, depressed, realized one thing clearly: that literary research had become abstract and highly specialized. He saw himself, through the course of years, hacking away in the dark, at the end of his own narrow shaft, in isolation from his fellows. He did not dread the work as work. H did deplore the specializatio and the isolation, and he w fearful of the consequences such specialization and isolatio on a mind devoted to literature He had seen too many veteran from the pits who blinked ow like in the light of common da and were tongue-tied from the own intense preoccupation.

The depressing prospect wa of course, rendered severa shades too melodramatic, by hi own youthfulness. The actual ity proved to be not nearly s bad. I must remind you that

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have been trying to recover a state of mind from a particular period—not to claim that my metaphor is an accurate rendering of the facts. But even so, I still think that the picture I have conjured up is not to be dismissed with a laugh. I maintain that in its essentials it gives a sound view of the possibilities and limitations of a certain kind of research.

There are two aspects of the situation suggested by my metaphor that I should like to stress. The first is the obsession with facts as facts; the second is the high degree of specialization. In dealing with the first I do not mean to disparage the importance of facts as facts. Some facts are all important; but some are of only limited importance; and some are merely curious. The fact of Shakespeare's texts, for example, is certainly all important. Linguistic and ideological facts, bearing as they do on Shakespeare's vocabulary, may be of great importance; but the facts of Shakespeare's life, considered strictly in terms of literary relevance, are of limited importance. The proof is that his plays come through so powerfully though we know very few facts of his life. Last of all, there are facts which are merely curious. I should love nothing better, for example, than to be able to find a letter in Shakespeare's own handwriting—even if the letter merely discussed Stratford gossip or the details of his wardrobe, or refused a dinner engagement. I do not say that such a letter might not throw some light on Shakespeare's life and even possibly, just possibly, on the meaning of his plays, but I know that the chances are very great that the facts revealed would be, from the standpoint of literature, merely curious. I should treasure the letter, certainly. But if I am honest with myself, I realize that my motive would be finally sentimental.

I think that I read what is going on in the minds of a good many of you as I utter these heretical words: "But how can you say that any fact may not perhaps turn out to be relevant and highly important? The chemist has learned that any experiment, however 'irrelevant,' may be the key to important truths." Yes, I am familiar with this view, and I honor the grain of truth that it contains; but I think that we have allowed ourselves to be hypnotized by our colleagues in the science departments. We have come to worship the accumulation of facts—any facts—to the point that our departments are buried beneath the heaps of irrelevant facts, the slag which I mentioned earlier. For our profession to teach literature in itself provides us with a center of relevance. I do not claim that it constitutes the only center of relevance, or that teaching literature ought to be our sole task. But until we do a better job of teaching literature than we now do, I think that we stand convicted of neglecting the center in favor of the peripheries, of dredging up curious facts about the poet's life or social milieu instead of dealing competently with the poem.

The second point which I said I wanted to amplify is our specialization. It is obviously closely related to our overconcern with facts in the mass. We have put such a premium on digging up any facts, however irrelevant to literature, that each of us is tempted to work away in separation and in essential isolation from his fellows. The common ground that English professors share is, I am afraid, primarily a set of research techniques. What do English professors read for pleasure? What do they honestly like? Where does their disciplined taste find a common ground? In my more cynical moments I am inclined to say that what they enjoy in common is exhausted by the Essays of Elia and the less acerb ironies of **The New Yorker.** That our interests are not focused on literature, that our attitudes and techniques are those of lesser historians, that we are no longer men of letters—these things account for the notorious gap which exists between the English department and the practising craftsman — between the academic mind and the mind of the creative writer. This situation also accounts, it seems to me, for the lack of seriousness with which the English professor is usually, and I fear too often properly, regarded by his colleagues.

What I have just said will explain why I shall not propose some of the obvious solutions for our problems of research. But it may be well for me to indicate quite specifically that I am not unaware of these obvious solutions. In the first place, I grant that we do not yet know all we want to know about the eighteenth century, or the Elizabethan period, or any other period. I admit that really perfect editions of many of the principal poets are lacking. I am aware that unpublished letters and diaries are still to be found in the British Museum and in other great libraries. Moreover, after the exciting discoveries of the Boswell papers at Malahide Castle and at Fettercairn, it would be a rash man who would predict that further discoveries of the first importance will not be made. Someone was telling me the other day that we might expect a good many fresh discoveries in the next few years because the heavy land taxes in England and the consequent closing of the great houses will probably bring out of obscurity masses of material. In any case, in the years to come a great deal of conventional research will go on, and ought to go on. But to repeat, such accessions of new ore will not solve our problem nor will they prevent other graduate students interested in literature from feeling, as I

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felt, that they are reporting for work at an old, old mine, and must prepare to spend a great part of their lives deep underground. And lest the reiteration of the last phrase hint at an inveterate claustraphobia on my part, or suggest a lily-handed aversion to honest toil, let me say that I hold a union card, and have spent several years, and expect to spend many more, quite happily, following a vein that leads through the midstrata of the eighteenth century.

Well, then, what does remain to be done in English literature? Much, I should say, a very great deal indeed. We might begin by making a critical examination of the literature, for example; and lest this seem too brash, let me hasten to amplify. My own personal experience has been that many a poem which I was confident to know, it turned out I did not know at all. The poem revealed depths not before suspected. I am not speaking here of trivia, of minor elegancies. I am thinking of the fundamentals of meaning. Poems that had been assigned a particular meaning showed, on inspection, that they were something quite different. If you will pardon personal illustrations, let me give one or two. It was for me exciting to find that Marvell's "Horatian Ode" was not a Puritan poem, not even a Cromwellian poem at its center, and certainly not a cool and moderate splitting of the difference between extremes. Marvell had found a synthesis in which his attitudes toward Charles I and toward the usurper Cromwell could be united. Here was no vacillation of the trimmer, nor the moderation of the impartial honest broker between factions—not unless cool moderation might itself be passionate, and ice burn like fire. It was exciting to discover that Herrick's "Corinna's Going A-Maying" was no reiteration of the pagan **carpe diem** theme — that in the very texture of this limpid poem Christianity and paganism were arrayed in conscious antagonism, so that the song became brilliantly dramatic. Perhaps I should not use the term "discover." Perhaps they were not discoveries at all, but merely my own personal recoveries of the poems. But at any rate, they had to be recovered; they did not exist in print, and yet they bear powerfully and directly on one's teaching of the poems. They tie into specifically literary problems and the whole realm of literary value. They do even more. They have powerful repercussions on the whole realm of unsorted facts, for they provide a center of relevance which makes certain facts acquire significance in literary terms.

To illustrate, the special synthesis which Herrick makes of Christian and pagan materials lights up his whole concern with pagan festivals as indicated in so many of the poems in the **Hesperides.** The precise nature of Marvell's estimate of Cromwell does much to smooth the very erratic political course which he pursued from his royalist poems of 1649 and his attack on the parliamentarian Tom May in 1650, to his becoming, a few months later, the tutor in the Puritan Fairfax's household. As I tried to indicate earlier, there can be no objection to digging up facts, but if we profess literature we need to know which facts are relevant and which are not. The facts cannot be counted on to sort and assemble themselves into a pattern. A more intimate understanding of the literature might provide hypotheses for our facts. The facts do not interpret literature; rather the literature interprets the facts.

But this matter of providing a center for our conventional research, though important, is finally secondary. What is exciting and what is of first importance is to see that the big problems and the directly relevant problems to literature have been almost untouched. I am conscious of no exaggeration in saying that the "big" problems are still untouched, and that for a person interested in literature the metaphor of the worked-out mine has no longer any relevance. He is much more likely to feel like an explorer standing on a ridge which overlooks an all but virgin continent. I am willing to apply the last metaphor even to Shakespeare himself. Miss Spurgeon's book on Shakespeare's imagery is valuable, not so much for what it accomplishes as for the possibilities it opens up. It leads into the forest but does little more than penetrate beyond its edge. G. Wilson Knight's books on Shakespeare, again, constitute forays into the wilderness rather than beaten paths. I should add that his trails sometimes double back on themselves or lose themselves in metaphysical swamps. But they do point a direction. If this is true of Shakespeare, it should be more obviously true of other poets and dramatists and writers of fiction.

I think that it is true of them, though limitation of time forbid further illustrations. Suffice it to say that we are witnessing in our time a critical revolution fraught with most important consequences for the study of literature. In it one can find gathered the impact of semantics, anthropology, and some aspects of the new psychology, but most important of all is a willingness to take literature seriously, and to take the role of the artist seriously. The movement (if one can call something so vague a movement), I dare say, has its lunatic fringe. It is possible that I represent this fringe, though I have tried to be moderate and restrained in my claims. At any rate, even a lunatic can see that the new critical emphasis is not, on principle, hostile to the older scholarship. It needs the older scholarship, and, as I have tried to indicate, it can, in turn, aid it.

Thus far, I have dealt with the whole problem in the narrowest of professional terms. I have simply assumed that English professors are important. I have not questioned our function or status in society. I have dealt with the matter merely in terms of materials for us to work, without special attention to the question of whether it was work which justified itself in value to the society or was merely busy work. But I should feel that I have insulted this audience if I did not glance at least at the larger issue.

I suppose that the salient fact about our society is the predominance of means over ends, techniques over values, analysis over synthesis. Recently the split in our society has become alarming. It has alarmed even the technicians. Increasingly the custodians of the humanities are being asked to restore a synthesis—to point us toward values. I myself think that this new concern for the importance of the humanities is coming a little late. I am not sure that our society has not been too deeply fissured and fissioned for a group of English professors to do much about it. But whether or not we can hope to repair the damage, it surely behooves us to be about our proper job, to concern ourselves with the permanent qualities of literature rather than what may be called the sociology of literature. "In short, the professor of literature needs to take seriously again the art which he professes. He must not forget that it is an art." He must be prepared to deal with it in its dimension as an art. If he does so he will at least have the satisfaction of finding that it is a dimension in which so few have gone before him, that it is new, exciting, even an adventure.

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